



# Emergency Management **UPDATE**

October 2000

## **News Notes**

**VDEM Needs You ...** to help us make the push for preparedness. Through these statewide awareness campaigns, we can open doors for disaster education: *Winter Preparedness Week* (Nov. 12-18, 2000) *Tornado Preparedness Day* (March 27, 2001) Call Rohn Brown at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6519, for information or assistance.

**Making a move.** Mary Camp has been named director of VDEM's Preparedness and Mitigation Division. Look for her profile in next month's issue and on our Web site.

**This month in Virginia Hurricane History.** Hazel made her mark on the Commonwealth with both wind damage and flooding. On Oct. 15, 1954, Hazel sustained hurricane-force winds up the East Coast and produced a number of record wind gusts. The storm destroyed hundreds of thousands of trees and knocked out half the state's phone and electric lines. In all, 13 people died and damages were conservatively estimated at \$15 million. Visit our Web site at [www.vdem.state.va.us/library/vahurr/va-hurr.htm](http://www.vdem.state.va.us/library/vahurr/va-hurr.htm) to learn more.

## **Making the volunteer connection**

By Bob Lambert  
*VDEM Reservist*

**W**hen you pull together a group of enthusiastic, committed volunteers, you get a burst of energy that makes your mission more than possible. No mountain is too high, no task too hard. Over time, that dynamism can fade.

For emergency managers, the volunteer cadre is vital in planning for and responding to emergencies. When the "Big One" hits, everyone must be ready. The success of your retention efforts shows up when your volunteers do.

Natalie Davis, Stafford County volunteer coordinator, says attracting and retaining volunteers for her successful Emergency Response Citizen Assistance Team (ERCAT) has been a major challenge.

About 30 of 95 current Stafford County volunteers serve on the ERCAT, which works to quell rumors and relieve the 911 call load.

"You have to recruit, screen and train your volunteers," Davis says. "Between times you have to stay in touch. You send birthday cards. We have a computer program that generates nice individualized cards. It even does get well cards."

In addition to regular training that brings volunteers together, social events spread out during the year help maintain contact and interest.



**Plugged in for success.** Bill Bowers of the Stafford County ERCAT checks out phone center equipment to ensure readiness for the next emergency call.

"A couple of times a year, all county volunteers are invited to regular employee social events like the Christmas party and the annual picnic," she says. "We treat volunteers just like employees."

"The more they know, the more prepared you are. If you have a disaster, you'll have spontaneous volunteers."

FEMA has recognized the importance of attracting and retaining volunteers for its Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. The city of Hampton was the first Virginia locality to launch a CERT.

Robert J. Curtin Jr., Hampton fire and rescue recruiter and retention administrator, is responsible for recruitment **AND** retention of volunteers for six fire companies and four

rescue squads. Since volunteers often fill in for full-time employees, they require a high level of training and readiness.

The city has 214 employees in fire and rescue, including civilians, and about 200 volunteers. As the city pays for expensive training, the volunteers must sign agreements that they will serve the community for a set period of time before moving to full-time opportunities elsewhere.

"In the past two years, I'd estimate that 75 percent of the new volunteers are career-oriented," Curtin says.

When Hurricane Floyd swept through Tidewater a year ago, many of Curtin's volunteers served in the flooded city of Franklin.

He says participation in fire and rescue activities, continuing training and the ability to make decisions on duty all help to retain volunteers.

"We keep our volunteers active," Curtin says. "It keeps them operational."

Pulling volunteers together from different areas creates a synergism that works in Russell County.

"We have combined our fire and emergency services and Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) volunteer programs," says Judy W. Cooling, emergency services coordinator.

*(cont'd on page 4)*

# Disaster preparedness in any language

By Rohn Brown, VDEM Public Affairs  
Outreach Coordinator

**L**iving through a hurricane is tough enough if your house is flooded, your possessions are ruined and you do not have flood insurance.

Just imagine if you cannot speak the native language and do not understand the culture.

Last September, thousands of non-English-speaking Hispanics were victims of Hurricane Floyd in eastern North Carolina. Many were migrant agricultural workers, spending three months at one location before picking up and leaving for work elsewhere.

The Hispanic population is increasing across the country and experts predict that by the year 2007 it will be the largest minority in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 254,297 Hispanics living in Virginia. Based on the nature of migrants, census undercounts and "underground" populations, these are conservative estimates.

"There is a vast underground economy and population that exists in the Hispanic community," said Frank Ramos, chief deputy director of the Virginia Department of Minority Business Enterprise.

"My sense is that immigrants come from different cultural experiences. In some cases, they are fearful of the government and any other authority figures."

These factors make disaster awareness education and recovery a significant challenge. Virginia emergency managers can use lessons learned from North Carolina during Hurricane Floyd to learn to communicate with Hispanic and other non-English-speaking populations.

"We had the most success in getting the word out through the local Hispanic radio stations," said Thomas Hegele, chief of the Education and Emergency Information section of the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management.

"When you work with Hispanic stations, it's important to translate the release into Spanish."

A toll-free phone number was also activated during the storm to help answer disaster-related questions. The phone number was available to all flood victims



**Check your sources.** Coloring books and other translated materials are just one method of communicating your disaster preparedness message.

but was a particularly effective method for Spanish-speaking callers.

"At one time, we had as many as 30 operators staffing our hotline," said Hegele. "During the shifts, we had at least one bilingual staff member answering calls.

"The hotline also provided an excellent way to monitor the issues that we might be able to deal with through a release or media advisory."

The North Carolina Emergency Operations Center also has one person in their statewide joint information center who is fluent in Spanish to ensure that press releases and media advisories are translated and sent to the appropriate media outlets.

The success of North Carolina's outreach efforts stems from Dr. Nolo Martinez, the state director of Hispanic/Latino Affairs.

Dr. Martinez is a member of the Cooperative Extension faculty at North Carolina State University and has worked extensively with Hispanic migrant workers. This link to the Cooperative

Extension Service has proven important in meeting Hispanic population needs.

"The Cooperative Extension Service was a logical fit to assist during a disaster, especially for the Hispanic community," said Dr. Martinez. "The extension agents have the communications and education network to get the disaster recovery information out to the public."

Teaming with other organizations with similar interests and goals can enhance your local disaster education plan. Check the VDEM Web site for links to the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, FEMA, American Red Cross, North Carolina Extension Service and the North Carolina Department of Hispanic/Latino Affairs for additional ideas and resources.

Does your locality have an innovative or successful disaster education or awareness program? Let us know about it so we can feature it on our Web site.

Send your e-mail message to Rohn Brown at [rbrown@vdem.state.va.us](mailto:rbrown@vdem.state.va.us) or call at (804) 897-6510.

**Editor's Note:** The Spanish language tornado preparedness coloring book shown here was colorized as a graphic illustration. Check out the color version of "Update" on our Web site at [www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate](http://www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate) for the full picture.

## Don't get lost in the translation

Here are some points to consider when starting your next program:



- Study the demographics of your population. What languages and ethnic groups will you need to prepare for?
- Involve your local "opinion leaders" in your disaster education programs. These could be religious leaders, community activists and the proprietors of stores that cater to your target population.
- Don't assume that translated brochures will be read. Consider other mediums in getting your message to your groups.



# New terrorism response course makes the grade

By Patrick M. Collins, Technical Instructor

**T**he VDEM Technological Hazards Division has now taken the wraps off its brand-new course titled “*Public Safety Response to Terrorism—Tactical Considerations*.” Under development for almost five months, this class is designed for emergency response first-line supervisors who will respond to and operate at a terrorist incident.

Featuring classroom sessions, scenarios and practical exercises, the course has been crafted to make first responders aware of actions that can be taken during the initial stages of a terrorist incident. Training topics include responder self-protection, personal protective equipment, scene security and control, mass decontamination, medical considerations and hazard control.

This is actually the third course developed by VDEM as a part of Virginia’s ongoing terrorism training program. The first, “*Public Safety Response to Terrorism*,” was designed to raise the level of awareness of those responders who may be called upon to operate at a terrorist incident. The target audience for this class is law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services and other emergency managers.

The second course, “*Public Safety Response to Terrorism—Management Considerations*,” was designed for emergency managers, i.e., those responders that would be responsible for managing the incident or operating as managers of sectors or divisions within the Incident Command System.



**Trial by “fire.”** Members of the Chesterfield Fire Department assist with a mass decontamination demonstration during the pilot offering of the course.

A pilot version of the new class was held on August 22-23 to iron out the rough spots and ensure the course meets the objectives and the needs of the local first responder community. Last month’s Hazardous Materials Conference in Virginia Beach provided the venue for the first official offering of the training.

For more information about any of these terrorism training courses, contact Patrick M. Collins at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6568.

## Burdick to helm Tech Haz



**V**DEM has shifted the composition of its Technological Hazards Division by naming Brett Burdick to fill the director position.

A core element of the agency since 1994, Burdick is a Certified Hazardous Materials Manager (Masters Level) and a professional geologist in the states of Maine and Kentucky. He has most recently demonstrated his wealth of knowledge by simultaneously managing two key VDEM programs.

As Environmental Programs Manager, he directed the environmental restoration of the Commonwealth’s Emergency Fuel Storage Facility in York County. His position as Terrorism Program Manager gave him oversight for the state consequence management efforts and preparedness for terrorist incidents. Now he will use his experience and expertise to oversee a broad spectrum of hazardous materials issues and programs.

“Virginia’s hazardous materials program is recognized as one of the premier programs in the nation and has received both national and international recognition,” says Burdick. “My goal is to continue to expand the quality and the capabilities of all of our programs.”

Burdick can be reached via e-mail at [bburdick@vdem.state.va.us](mailto:bburdick@vdem.state.va.us) or phone at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6569.

## Tracking weather to the “Max”

**W**eather watchers at the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) now have another tool to help track incoming storms and pinpoint potential trouble areas. Provided by WTVR TV, DopplerMax6 weather radar will allow VEOC staff to zoom in on the weather picture anywhere in Virginia (block-by-block if necessary) with a click of the mouse.

The TV image is updated every three minutes and automatically refreshed every 60 seconds to the most current view. Dominion Virginia Power helped WTVR underwrite the cost of the enhanced radar system, considered one of the most advanced in the state.

The system will augment National Weather Service forecasts, which are VDEM’s primary means of issuing warnings and tracking weather. (Below left to right) Mark Pimentel from WTVR

TV6, Carl Babb of Dominion Virginia Power and VDEM State Coordinator

Michael Cline discuss the system during the presentation ceremony last month.



# Training Calendar

## Emergency Management

### Emergency Planning Workshop

October 11-13/Charlottesville

### Mass Fatalities Incident Mgmt.

October 17-19/Roanoke

### Basic Public Information Officer

October 25-27/Charlottesville

### Hazardous Weather and Flooding

Prep. - October 31-November 2/  
Charlottesville

### Coordinator's Briefing

November 8/Williamsburg

### EOC Mgmt. and Operations

November 14-16/Roanoke

## Search and Rescue

### Managing Search Operations

October 14-15 (II)/Charlottesville

## SAR Council/Mgmt Conference

October 21/Richmond

GSAR (I)—October 27-29/Marion

GSAR (II)—November 10-12

## Reservist Training

### Tabletop Exercise

October 3/Richmond

### Reservist Program Orientation

October 12/Richmond

### Lessons Learned Workshop

October 17/Roanoke

### Med-Flight Procedures/Plotting

October 26-27/Richmond

### Reservist Program Seminar

November 16/Richmond

### HF/Operation Secure Procedures

November 16-17/Richmond

## Technological Hazards

### Hazmat Technician

October 16-27/Ashland

### Public Safety Response to

Terrorism-Mgmt. Considerations

October 17-18/Lynchburg

### Advanced Hazmat Control

November 13-17/Ashland

## Volunteer Connection *(continued from page 1)*

Regular contact keeps everyone familiar with emergency needs. "We put them all together. It seems to work better," Cooling says. "We discuss the concerns of the business community, hospitals, fire and rescue and community groups. There is a lot of overlap. We work in a round table setting, looking for good ideas."

In Winchester, Jeff Rezin, director of environmental health and safety for Geon Engineered Films, has chaired his community's 16-member LEPC almost since its inception in 1987. Many other members have re-upped with him.

He attributes the group's continuity to keeping the agenda short and ensuring projects relate to the mission. The LEPC meets on a quarterly basis but will meet more frequently when necessary.

"We don't meet unless we have something to talk about," Rezin says. "We get together, talk as much as we need to and then leave. Our last meeting was 30 minutes."

Selby C. Jacobs, retired from a career in emergency management, serves as state Disaster Recovery Task Force coordinator, Department of Housing and Community Development.

"Volunteer services are wanted and appreciated," Jacobs says. "Their time and efforts are truly valuable to the organization. They can bring knowledge and experience that the organization may be trying to gain. If they don't see it being used, you won't be able to retain them."

"Volunteers are no different from folks that get paid. They too must have their basic needs satisfied and feel a sense of worth."

For more information on recruiting and retaining volunteers, check the FEMA Web site at [www.fema.gov/emi/cert/prgmnt.htm](http://www.fema.gov/emi/cert/prgmnt.htm).

## Neighbors helping neighbors connect



The new Statewide Mutual Aid Implementation Guidebook is now posted in HTML, Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat pdf formats in the VDEM Web site library. Sample

resolution and agreement forms are available for downloading at [www.vdem.state.va.us/library/mutualaid/StateMAid.cfm](http://www.vdem.state.va.us/library/mutualaid/StateMAid.cfm). Contact Bill Edmonson at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6527, to learn more.

## Volunteers make Dante a flood to remember



Take a look at Judy Cooling's profile on our Web site at [www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate/profiles/cooling.htm](http://www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate/profiles/cooling.htm) to learn more about how she has used volunteers to make a difference in Russell County. Cooling sees partnerships as the key to enhancing awareness of emergency management programs.



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